

ALCYONE.

A CHILD'S ALLEGORY OF A STAR.

OME through the fields, one starlit summer night, walked a father, bearing in his arms his little daughter. She was frail and delicate—the one light her dying mother left to shine upon her husband's path when her light of life went out and left him desolate. To his child this father seemed indeed godlike, not only because he was stalwart and strong and unlike herself, but still more so because the pursuit of his life was a solemn and sublime one. He was an astronomer, and "called them all by their names"—those bright flocks pastured up yonder in the fields of the sky. He was one of those who made it the business of life, there in the quiet country, to bring the varied stores of his knowledge, "the fairy tales of science and the long results of time," into such a shape as would interest and instruct children. He seemed then, as was said, almost godlike to his own child—seemed, at least, like one of those Magi of whom she read in the most beautiful of all old-world stories. He was so; for he brought all the stores of his body and mind, his gold and frankincense and myrrh, and laid them down before one little cradle—that of the child his dead wife left him. So they walked home through the quiet fields that starry summer night.

As they neared their cottage, a bright meteor flashed athwart the heavens; and as father and child marked its mysterious course, his little daughter asked him, "What was that, father? Was that a great world hurried to ruin?"

"That is one of the astronomer's difficulties, Alcyonë. A great light seems to flicker and go out in heaven when the star falls, and yet we miss no orb from the sky."

"Do you know, father," Alcyonë whispered, nestling more closely to him, "that seems to me like what your death would be? The great world would go mourning after you in one long funeral procession; and then all would be dark."

The father smiled, and thought how little, how happily little, his child knew of the world, or of that *ignis fatuus*, fame.

"And now show me my namesake star, father. Ah! yes, I see it," as he pointed her to that familiar constellation, the Pleiades, with its brightest orb Alcyonë. "Tell me, father, why you christened me after that little star; it seems a very little one."

"Perhaps," said the astronomer, smiling sadly, "because you were a very little one when your dear mother and myself so named you. Perhaps, small fairy," he added, "because we thought you like that halcyon bird I sometimes see you flitting so strangely across our path as we walk by the stream; or perhaps again, more likely"—he mused, talking now rather to himself than the child—"because that star is the symbol of the astronomer's brightest dream. Mädler, of Dorpat, tells us that our sun, once deemed stationary, is revolving at the rate of more than 400,000 miles a day round that star as a centre, bearing with him the whole of our solar system. As far as we can see, that far-off sun, that little star Alcyonë, is the pivot of the universe, though there may be other centres beyond our ken, around which each of these centres revolves."

The child loved to hear him talk thus, as often he would talk to her, of moony Jupiter, of old hoary Saturn, with his chaplets of light, or of the red planet Mars—and she challenged him to go on with yet another question. "Still I do not see why I am like that star Alcyonë, father; pray tell me."

"Do you not see, darling?" he said. "Perhaps if God spares you to me you will understand some day;" and so they passed under the portal of their home.

God did *not* spare Alcyonë to her father, but took her to Himself: and then that lonely man perceived how, in very truth, the pivot of his life was gone. As Gerald Massey tenderly says:—

" You scarce could think so small a thing
Could leave a loss so large;
Her little light such shadow fling
From dawn to sunset's marge."

He wrote no more; no more swept with his telescope the star-studded sky. All his study was bound up in one old book now, the Bible, that told him of a reunion with Alcyonë and her mother.

Soon he passed away too, and for a brief while "left his name upon the harpstring." Men noticed his death indeed, as they read their

morning papers over their breakfast, or in the train going to business, but they passed on at once to the last novelty in their avocations or amusement. So sped his meteor-life away. Yet we, who followed him far as eye could reach, feel that he is once more with the child and wife of his love; still, it may be, looking up with them from some nearer nearness to the great centre of all being, God: it may be from that very star Alcyonë which once seemed the centre. There was one of kindred spirit, Isaac Taylor, who, in his "Physical Theory of Another Life," started this bold hypothesis with regard to the differences of stellar and planetary existence, that "while the planets are the places of animal and corruptible organisation, and the schools of initiation to all rational orders, the sun of each system is the home of the higher and ultimate spiritual corporeity, and the centre of assembly for those who have already passed their preliminary era upon the lower ranges of creation." That problem—ever a fascinating one to him—he had gone, with its originator, to solve—solve not singly, but hand-in-hand with loved ones gone before.

So was his being reinstated, and so the child's Allegory of the Star fulfilled. "As one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead."

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AUNT JUDY'S CORRESPONDENCE.

 LICE. This question was asked and answered in "Aunt Judy's Magazine" for April, 1868. The ground is not worth going over twice. As to the best cure for a naughty boy, Alice had better apply at once to the Lord Chancellor. Among his wards in Chancery he has no doubt had great experience on the subject.

"Kate B." It is certainly possible to "make an aquarium merely from country ponds and streams;" in other words, a *fresh-water* aquarium, as well as a *sea-water* one, but of course the objects would be quite different. If Kate B.'s ideas are very simple she had better begin at first

by keeping three or four tadpoles, to have the pleasure of seeing them *cut* their legs and turn into frogs. This is accomplished by filling a good-sized bowl of any sort three parts full with water, having an erection in the middle of bits of stone or rock, so arranged that it shall be partly out of the water. Stones with weed or moss upon them are desirable if they can be had. This serves for a resting-place for the little tadpoles, when, during the process of transformation, they feel the necessity for air. Many sorts of beetles may be added, as they are found, but the aquarium must on no account be crowded with creatures, otherwise they will die, as the people died in the Black Hole at